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BILL WANTS PARENTAL CONSENT REQUIRED FOR SEX EDUCATION

*Legislation*introduced yesterday by Rep. Stephen F. Freind would require that parents provide written consent for their children to be taught sex education in public schools.

Freind, a Republican from Delaware County, unveiled the contents of the measure during a news conference in the Capitol Rotunda attended by more than 250 cheering members of the Pennsylvania Parents' Commission.

Late last year, the commission, a statewide parents' advocacy group, was instrumental in helping to eliminate state Education Department guidelines, issued in 1984, containing materials considered inappropriate for children.

While not mandatory in Pennsylvania, the department estimates that between 80 and 90 percent of the state's 501 school districts offer some sort of sex education.

In most cases, parents have the option of excluding their children from the courses. Under Freind's bill, which has 112 co-sponsors in the House, parents would have to authorize the children to take the courses.

Freind and supporters said the provision was comparable to current school district policies that require written approval from parents for children to play football or perform in the band.

The intention of the proposed bill, the backers said, is to give parents control over sex education.

''I don't think we can consider sex education a core topic like geography and history. It's totally values-laden,'' said Susan Odom, a Parents' Commission member from Radnor. (The bill) does the people who want the sex-education program no damage at all.''

The bill would also:

* Require sex-education curricula to be available for review by parents and approved by local school boards before being used.

* Force school boards to hold public hearings about sex-education curricula and make school districts mail curriculum outlines to parents' homes.

* Require school districts to stress that abstinence from sexual activity is the only ''completely reliable'' method of preventing AIDS, venereal diseases and pregnancy.

* Prohibit school districts from dispensing contraceptives or providing or funding services related to abortion, family planning, pregnancy testing or contraceptive counseling.

If approved by the General Assembly and signed by the governor, the measure, known as the Parent and Pupil Protection Act, could go into effect during the next school year.

''If you want to teach sex education . . . you must involve the parents,'' said Freind. ''You must do more than impart knowledge.''

In a memo to House members, Freind said the bill ''seeks to protect parents against sex-education instruction which may be incompatible with the

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religious, moral and social values they wish to instill in their children or which they believe may violate their family's personal*privacy.''*

Thomas J. Gentzel, a lobbyist for the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, said he had not reviewed the proposed*legislation*but would be concerned by any provision that removes local control of curricula.

''Sex education is a far more controversial and sensitive subject than trigonometry,'' said Gentzel. ''But, on the other hand, boards find themselves trying to satisfy a wide range of people. The actual content of courses has historically been approved at the local level. Even with a seemingly innocuous requirement, we limit the local decision-making.''

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